Losses of Duty Free Shops

2506. SHRI C.P. THIRUNAVUKKARASU: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that duty free shops and related business has accumulated heavy loss during the financial year;

(b) if so, the details thereof alongwith the reasons therefor; and

(c) the steps proposed to be taken for recovery of losses and make business profitable again?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Duty Free Trade activity has incurred provisional loss of Rs.5.35 crores during 2001-02 which is attributed to:

- Steep increase in rentals/royalty payable to Airports Authority of India.
- Custom restrictions on sale of liquor.
- Decline in international tourist traffic due to unforeseen and unprecedented events like terrorists attack of Sept. 11 on World Trade Centre, New York, Afghan War, terrorists attack on Indian Parliament in New Delhi, tension in Ayodhya, riots in Gujarat etc.
- Delay in commercial operation of new shops due to delay in grant of excise and trade licences by the respective State Governments.

(c) The remedial measures taken/being taken *inter-alia* include:

- Introduction of market sensitive pricing.
- Introducing of new products like Chocolates under the Ashok brand name.
- Launch of a new outlet at Delhi Airport for Indian Handicrafts in association with Central Cottage Industries Corporation Limited.
- Networking of Duty Free Shops with warehouses and Corporate office.
- Introduction of an incentive scheme to motivate employees.

- Holding shopping bonanza festival.

- Installation of touch screen kiosks to help passengers to browse through the range of merchandise, pricing and promotion.

Maintenance of Taj Mahal by private agencies

2507. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of TOURISM AND CULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that contract for maintaining the Taj Mahal has been entrusted to some private concern and not to Archaeological Survey of India;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor: and

(c) the terms and conditions of the agreement entered with the private concern for its maintenance?

THE MINISTER OF TOURISM AND CULTURE (SHRI JAGMOHAN): (a) to (c) No, Sir. The Archaeological Survey of India through the National Culture Fund has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Indian Hotels Company Limited to provide financial assistance towards conservation, environmental development and improvement of tourist-related amenities at the Taj Mahal. The conservation measures identified under the MoU will be executed by the Archaeological Survey of India alone.

Tourist-related facilities and environmental development will be promoted directly by the donor under the terms and conditions laid down by the Archaeological Survey of India.

In the first phase of the project Rs.1.87 crores has been earmarked for conservation, chemical preservation and beautification of the Taj Mahal.